ODP

Interoperable

Communications

Homeland Security

COMMUNICATIONS INTEROPERABILITY

Technical Assistance To Support America's First Responders

One of the most troubling lessons of September 11th was the critical need for communications interoperability within our first responder community.

> "The Department of Homeland Security encourages mutual aid compacts and interoperability so that first responders from different agencies, municipalities, and even States, from one State to another, can communicate during a terrorist attack. And, as we've seen, terrorist attacks have no boundaries."
>
> Secretary Tom Ridge

The U.S. PATRIOT Act of 2001 made the Office for Domestic Preparedness (ODP) responsible for coordinating and improving communications systems for States and localities.

One of the major vulnerabilities in combating terrorism is the lack of "interoperable" communications systems—equipment and systems that allow first responders to communicate with one another at the time of a terrorist attack. In Fiscal Year 2004, ODP is making interoperable communications technical assistance available for the 51 jurisdictions in the Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI), as well as for select statewide efforts.

The Interoperability Challenge

In the simplest terms, multi-agency interoperability is the ability of two or more public safety agencies to exchange

information, when and where it is needed, even when different communication systems are involved.

Effective and efficient emergency response requires coordination, communication, and sharing of information among numerous public safety agencies. Thousands of incidents that require mutual aid and coordinated response happen each day.

Terrorist incidents, such as the attack on the World Trade Center or the bombing

at Oklahoma City, test the ability of first responder agencies to mount well-coordinated responses. In an era where communication technology can reach the farthest corners of the world, too many public safety and emergency response personnel cannot communicate with one another during routine operations let alone during major emergencies.

ODP's Interoperable Communications Technical Assistance Program (ICTAP)
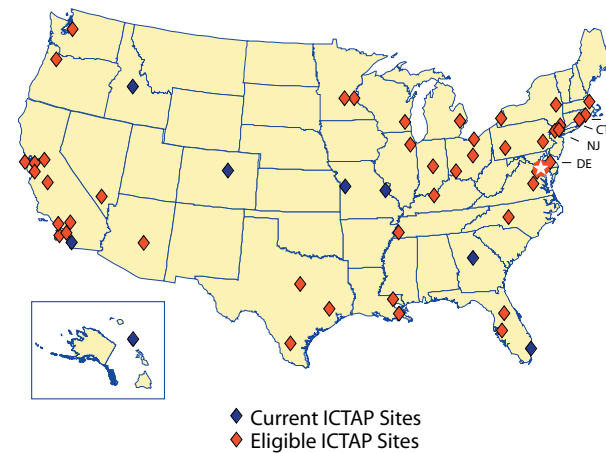
As the lead Federal agency responsible for strengthening the Nation's response to a terrorist weapon of mass destruction (WMD), ODP can provide true interoperable communications support for local and State first responder agencies through the provision of the following technical assistance:

- Needs Assessment
- Enhancement Definition
- Implementation
- Maintenance & Training
- Exercises

In each area, ODP works to ensure that local and State responders are prepared to address the critical strain that a WMD event would place on the jurisdiction's communications infrastructure.

Technical Assistance—*An Essential Component for Success*

With support from the U.S. Navy's Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center–San Diego (SSC-SD), ODP will provide

◆ Current ICTAP Sites
◆ Eligible ICTAP Sites

technical assistance for the interoperable communications efforts of the UASI sites. SSC-SD will work closely, on site, with local leadership to define, implement, and exercise architecture enhancements. Assistance is provided over four phases:

Phase 1—Requirements Definition: ODP will work jointly with jurisdictions to identify the communications requirements of emergency service organizations during coordinated public safety responses to terrorist events. The current architecture will be assessed in detail. The outcome will be a detailed definition of interoperability needs.

Phase 2—Enhancement Definition: ODP will assess a variety of potential solutions that could address the needs identified in Phase 1. Solutions may be short-term and long-term, integrating other local, State, and Federal initiatives. ODP's technology evaluation site hosts both common and emerging technologies for reference during this Phase. The outcome is an implementation plan approved by the Urban Area Working Group (UAWG).

Phase 3—Implementation: This phase will provide implementation and integration of the plan from Phase 2. Each jurisdiction will be offered follow-on maintenance lasting for a period of up to 12 months.

Phase 4—Continuum of Services: ODP will continue to provide technical assistance to the jurisdiction with additional training needs, exercise coordination, and utilization evaluations. In addition, UAWGs may decide to direct further effort in any of the four phases.

The experience gained with each site will be used to develop a better understanding of best practices and solutions for other sites across the Nation.

A Record of Success

In 2000, the U.S. Government, working with SSC-SD technical support, assisted Denver-area law enforcement agencies supporting drug task forces to address communications interoperability needs. Following a survey of operational requirements and existing systems, SSC-SD implemented interoperable systems in seven areas throughout the State. The Denver-area system was put into full operational use on August 21, 2001.

Follow-up utilization reports indicate that the systems installed are being incorporated into normal daily operations, as well as providing interoperability for other public safety uses, such as bomb scares and wildfires. A detailed technical report on the installation is available upon request through SSC-SD.

ODP Funding for Interoperability Equipment

State Formula Grant Funds: ODP formula funding enables local and State agencies to purchase sophisticated, specialized equipment to counter incidents involving WMD. Funds are awarded to States, which in turn distribute funds according to statewide strategies developed with local jurisdictions. Interoperable communications is a key issue of concern in most State strategies, and ODP has included this needed communications equipment in the allowable uses of the funding.

Urban Areas Security Initiative: To address high-threat cities and regions throughout the U.S., DHS has established the Urban Areas Security Initiative Program (UASI) within ODP. To date, over $1.5 billion has been allocated for local and State agencies through the UASI Program.